

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 FEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAM-01 SAJ-01 SY-05 SCCT-01

ACDA-05 OMB-01 USSS-00 OPR-02 AID-05 EB-07 TRSE-00

COME-00 LAB-04 SIL-01 PER-01 PPT-01 SCA-01 SCS-03 A-01

SAB-01 /114 W

----- 107754

O P 151427Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6230

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USUN MISSION NEW YORK 2947

USCINCEUR

DIA WASHDC

CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 11557

GENEVA FOR SAUNDERS

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, LE

SUBJECT: JUMBLATT CALLS OFF STRIKE, BUT CLASHES MOUNT

REF: (A) BEIRUT 11463; (B) BEIRUT 11508

1. SUMMARY: LEFTIST LEADER KEMAL JUMBLATT, CONFRONTING NEARLY SOLID OPPOSITION TO HIS CALL FOR A GENERAL TRIKE, CALLED OFF THE STRIKE SEPT 14, THE DAY BEFORE IT WAS TO BEGIN. THIS DECISION FOLLOWED TWO MEETINGS BETWEEN JUMBLATT AND PRIME MINISTER KARAME. MEANWHILE, CLASHES HAVE ESCALATED IN SOME PARTS OF THE COUNTRY INCLUDING BEIRUT, CONSIDERABLY HEIGHTENING TENSIONS DESPITE THE GENERAL RELIEF FELT FROM JUMBLATT'S ANNOUNCEMENT. GAS IS STILL IN SHORT SUPPLY. END SUMMARY.

2. THE SECURITY SITUATION OVER THE WEEKEND WAS LIKE A GOOD NEWS BS. BAD NEWS JOKE, BUT THE RESULT IS DISTINCTLY UNFUNNY TO THE BEIRUT MAN IN THE STREET.

3. THE GOOD NEWS WAS THAT JUMBLATT CANCELLED HIS GENERAL STRIKE CALLED FOR TODAY, SEPT 15. HIS PRIMARY MOTIVE WAS UNDOUBTEDLY THE NEARLY SOLID OPPOSITION HE FACED FROM MOSLEM AND "MODERATE" FEDAYEEN GROUPS, FROM WHICH HE HAD EXPECTED TO GLEAN SUPPORT. THE STATEMENT OF SHIITE IMAM MUSA SADR ON BEHALF OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS (REF A) WAS THE FIRST MAJOR SIGN OF OPPOSITION, AND SAIQA'S POSITION (REFS A AND B) MADE IT ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT SAIQ AND THE PLO WERE TAKING A HANDS-OFF ATTITUDE. ASSEM KANSO, HEAD OF THE PRO-SYRIAN BAATH IN LEBANON, PUBLICLY CRITICIZED THE DETRACTORS OF KARAME SEPT. 12-- A MOVE INDICATING, TOGETHER WITH SAIQA'S ATTITUDE, THAT SYRIA SOUGHT TO COOPERATE WITH THE PRIMIN. THE FINAL BLOW TO JUMBLATT'S HOPES CAME SEPT. 13, WHEN BEIRUT MERCHANTS AND THE LABOR MOVEMENT COLLECTIVELY ANNOUNCED THEIR REJECTION OF THE STRIKE.

4. KARAME CAPITALIZED ON THIS CAREFULLY FORGED CONSENSUS BY CALLING PERSONALLY ON JUMBLATT SEPT. 14, THEIR FIRST MEETING IN MANY WEEKS. THIS GESTURE, PLUS A SECOND MEETING BETWEEN THE TWO THAT INCLUDED 'ARAFAT, GAVE JUMBLATT A FACE-SAVING PRETEXT TO CALL OFF THE

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PROJECTED STRIKE. HE AND HIS LEFTIST ALLIES, INCLUDING THE PRO-IRAQI BAATH PARTY AND THE LEBANESE COMMUNIST PARTY, ISSUED A STATEMENT SEPT 14 DECLARING THAT UNNAMED ELEMENTS WHO SEEK TO PROVOKE CONFESSIONAL DISTURBANCES MIGHT EXPLOIT THE STRIKE, AND THEREFORE THEY WISHED TO CANCEL IT. THERE IS SPECULATION THAT KARAME MADE SOME POLITICAL CONCESSIONS TO JUMBLATT TO GET THE LATTER TO CHANGE HIS MIND, BUT NO CONCRETE SIGN OF THIS HAS

APPEARED OTHER THAN KARAME'S OWN VERY CONCILIATORY
PUBLIC REMARKS ABOUT JUMBLATT WHEN THE STRIKE WAS DROPPED.

5. NOW THE BAD NEWS: CONSIDERABLE ESCALATION OF INCIDENTS
OCCURRED IN BEIRUT SEPT 14 AND EARLY SEPT 15 FOLLOWING
KIDNAPPINGS SEPT 13. THE MOSLEM QUARTER OF BABA AND
THE MIXED QUARTER OF SINN AL FIL WERE THE SCENE OF
SPORADIC BUT SOMETIMES HEAVY SHELLING, AND OTHER SECTIONS
OF THE CITY ALSO WITNESSED CLASHES. A DISPUTE AT A GAS
STATION (INVOLVING THREE PHALANGISTS AGAINST ANOTHER
CHRISTIAN) EVIDENTLY SPARKED ONE OF THE INCIDENTS. THE
FIGHTING, THOUGH INTERMITTENT, HAD REPORTEDLY NOT
CEASED AS OF 1200 HOURS (LOCAL) SEPT 15.

6. THE NEWS FROM THE NORTH IS LIKEWISE NOT GOOD. THOUGH THE
TRIPOLI-ZGHORTA AND AKKAR ZONES REMAIN BASICALLY UNDER
CONTROL, CLASHES OCCURRED WITHIN TRIPOLI DURING THE WEEKEND.
THE PRESS EPT 13 REPORTED A LARGE-SCALE EXODUS OF RESIDENTS
FROM AT LEAST ONE CHRISTIAN VILLAGE IN AKKAR REGION, A PRE-
DOMINANTLY MOSLEM AREA, INDICATING CONTINUED HIGH COMMUNAL
TENSION THERE. THIS REPORT WAS LATER CONFIRMED BY AN ARMY SOURCE.
THE LATEST AND POTENTIALLY MOST SERIOUS INCIDENT TOOK
PLACE JUST SOUTH OF TRIPOLI EARLY MORNING SEPT 15. A
LEFTIST GROUP FROM TRIPOLI, THE "OCTOBER 24TH MOVEMENT"
WHICH IS HEADED BY FIREBRAND FAROUK AL MUKADAM, REPORTEDLY
STARTED CHECKING THE ID CARDS OF WORKERS AND OTHERS
NEAR THE CHEKKA CEMENT COMPLEX. THE ARMY WAS CALLED
IN, AND 13 OF THE LATTER WERE KILLED. THOUGH NO
REPERCUSSIONS FROM THIS EVENT HAVE YET APPEARED, IT
COULD EASILY PROVOKE A LEFTIST ACCUSATION THAT THE
ARMY IS DIRECTED AGAINST THEM AND THE MOSLEMS AND NOT
AGAINST CHRISIANS.

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7. MEANWHILE, THE GAS SHORTAGE IS STILL UNSOLVED. WITH
ARRIVAL OF OILTANKER SHIP FRIDAY, OIL MINISTRY NOW CLAIMS
IT IS PROVIDING MARKET WITH MORE THAN NORMAL
DAILY CONSUMPTION OF GASOLINE, AND OIL MINISTER HAS APPEALED
TO PUBLIC TO STOP HOARDING. SECOND OILTANKER SHIP WITH
ANOTHER 5500 METRIC TONS OF GASOLINE, ORIGINALLY
SCHEDULED TO ARRIVE YESTERDAY, ARRIVES TODAY.
MINISTRY IS CONTRACTING FOR MORE. HOWEVER, TRAFFIC
REMAINS LIGHT, AND GAS STATION LINES ARE STILL LONG.
HIJACKINGS OF TANKER TRUCKS CONTINUE, EVEN THOUGH
ARMED ESCORTS ARE BEING PROVIDED AT LEAST PART
OF DISTANCE TO BEIRUT FROM MEDRECO REFINERY
NEAR SIDON.
LAMBRAKIS

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Message Attributes

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